



# The Barnard Bulletin

JANUARY 2026

*Happy New Year*

Vol. XLI No. 1

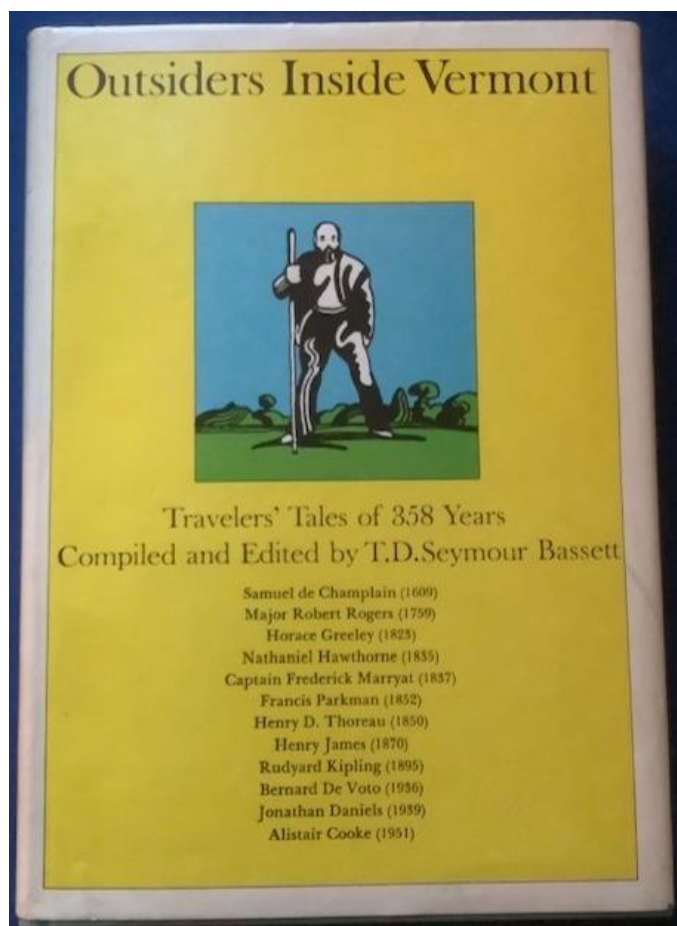
## A VERMONT WRITER

BY MARGARET EDWARDS

*This column, an offering of the Danforth Library in Barnard, usually introduces a Vermont writer who deserves wider renown. This edition, for the third time, features instead a Vermont editor who made a significant contribution by preserving writings about Vermont. Native Vermonter Thomas Day Seymour Bassett (known as Tom Bassett) was featured in the November and December Barnard Bulletins: following his biography were quoted selections written by lesser-known travelers to Vermont. This essay, likewise chiefly composed of quotations from Bassett's book, presents mid-nineteenth century impressions of Vermont set down by three famous authors.*

**Tom Bassett**

**1913 – 2004**



As a professor of history at the University of Vermont and the principal archivist in its Bailey Howe Library, Tom Bassett gathered thirty pieces into his 1967 anthology *Outsiders Inside Vermont*, subtitled *Travelers' Tales of 358 Years*. Here is how he describes his project in the book's "Foreword":

*Eyewitnesses wrote the stories in this book, gathered because they ring true to Vermont character as it has changed from colonial times to the present. Witnesses may not want to tell the truth, may not be able to, but they had the experience and their record is evidence worth considering.*

Bassett's method, as he put it, was that of "a bird-watcher or botanist" wanting to include impressions from "one of a kind"—by which he meant "rich men, poor men, doctors, lawyers, Whigs and Tories." His method, unfortunately, did not extend to collecting "one of a kind" from women writing their Vermont impressions. He includes a single sample; it's by the wife of a U. S. Army lieutenant, dismayed at her husband's assignment to "one-horse" Burlington.

In his selections Bassett keeps his focus on "outsiders, amazed at the obvious" who are "bringing a fresh view" to the state's various features, stereotypes and traditions. "Some things can't be seen," he writes, "except against a background of living in another part of the world." Below are excerpts quoted from Bassett's Part IV section entitled "Railroad Days 1850 – 1855." They feature nineteenth century impressions of Vermont set down by three writers now famous and familiar to all readers.



**Henry D. Thoreau**

1817 - 1862

*...was an American naturalist, essayist, and philosopher; best known for his book *Walden*, published in 1854. His association with Ralph Waldo Emerson and his residence*

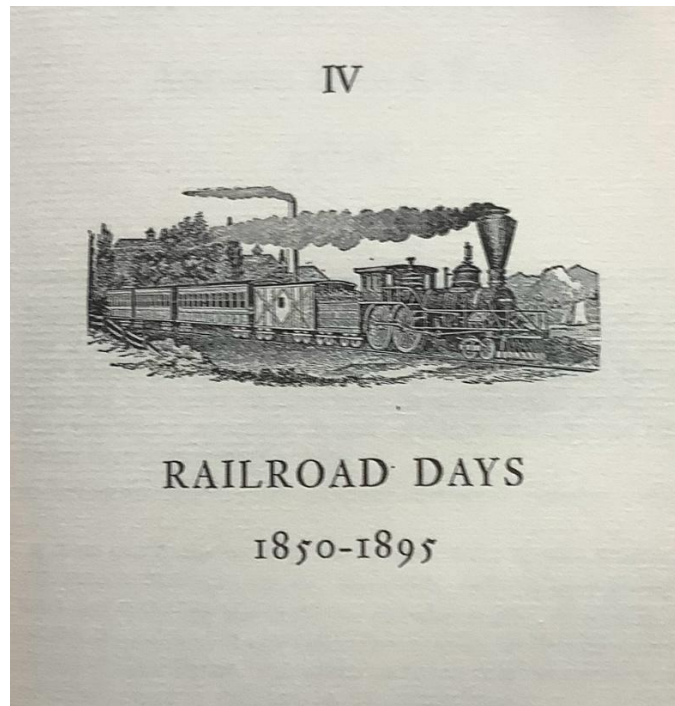
*in Concord, Massachusetts, provided a background for his most seminal work. Here he writes of a 1850 train trip he took north with his friend William Ellery Channing. Trains had been running through Vermont for less than a year. – M.F. E.*

### Autumn from a Train

[1850]

As we travel northwest up the country, sugar-maples, beeches, birches, hemlocks, spruce, butternuts, and ash trees prevail more and more. To the rapid traveler the number of elms in a town is the measure of its civility. One man in the cars has a bottle full of some liquor. The whole company smile whenever it is exhibited. I find no difficulty in containing myself.

Everyone will remember the approach to Bellows Falls, under a high cliff which rises from the Connecticut [River]. I was disappointed in the size of the river here; it appeared shrunk to a mere mountain stream. The water was evidently very low. In Ludlow, Mount Holly, and beyond, there is interesting mountain scenery, not rugged and stupendous, but such as you could easily ramble over—long, narrow, mountain vales through which to see the horizon. You are in the midst of the Green Mountains. A few more elevated blue peaks are seen from the neighborhood of Mount Holly, perhaps Killington Peak is one. Sometimes, as on the Western Railroad, you are whirled over mountainous embankments, from which the scared horses in the valleys appear diminished to hounds.



All the hills blush. I think that autumn must be the best season to journey over even the Green Mountains. You frequently exclaim to yourself, what *red* maples! The

sugar-maple is not so red. You see some of the latter with rosy spots or cheeks only, blushing on one side like fruit, while all the rest of the tree is green, proving either some partiality in the light or frosts, or some prematurity in particular branches.

Tall and slender ash-trees, whose foliage is turned to a dark mulberry color, are frequent. The butternut, which is a remarkably spreading tree, is turned completely yellow, thus proving its relation to the hickories. I was also struck by the bright yellow tints of the yellow birch. The trees looked like vast forest sheds, their branches stopping at a uniform height, four or five feet from the ground, like eaves, as if they had been trimmed by art, so that you could look under and through the whole grove with its leafy canopy, as under a tent whose curtain is raised.

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**Henry James**

1843 - 1916

*...was an American-British author, born American but later an English subject by choice, whose major novels continue to be highly acclaimed on both sides of the*

*Atlantic. Wikipedia says “he is regarded as a key transitional figure between literary realism and literary modernism, and he is considered by many to be among the greatest novelists of the English language.” – M.F.E.*

### A College Town in Lake Country

[1870]

My sail hitherward of four hours showed me the most and the best of Lake Champlain, delightfully free, noble, and open. It is narrow for a lake and broad for a river, yet it strikes you more as a river. The water is less blue and pure than that of Lake George—a concession of quality to quantity. But its great beauty is the really great style of the landscape: this grand unflowing river, as it seems, with the generous, prolonged simplicity of its shores—green and level, without being low, on the east (till you come abreast of the Green Mountains), on the west bordered by an immense panorama of magnificent hills, receding more dimly from line to line till they meet the steady azure of the great wall of the Adirondacks.

At Burlington, your seeming river broadens as if to the meeting of the sea, and the forward horizon becomes a long water-line. Hereabouts the Green Mountains rise up in the east to gaze across the broad interval at their marshalled peers in New York.

The vast reach of the lake and this double mountain view go far to make Burlington a supremely beautiful town. I know of it only so much as I learned in an hour's stroll, after my arrival. The lower portion by the lake-side is savagely raw and shabby, but as it ascends the long hill, which it partly covers, it gradually becomes the most truly charming, I fancy, of New England country towns.

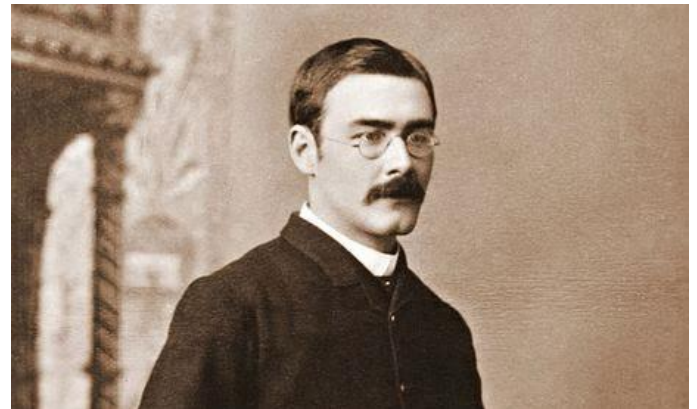
I followed a long street which leaves the hotel, crosses a rough, shallow ravine, which seems to divide it from the ugly poorness of the commercial quarter, and ascends a stately, shaded, residential avenue to no less a pinnacle of dignity than the University of Vermont. The university is a plain red building, with a cupola of beaten tin, shining like the dome of a Greek church, modestly embowered in scholastic shade—shade as modest as the number of its last batch of graduates, which I wouldn't for the world repeat. It faces a small enclosed and planted common. The whole spot is full of civic greenness and stillness and sweetness. It pleased me deeply, considering what it was. It reminded me the least bit in the world of a sort of primitive development of an English cathedral close. On the summit of the hill, where it leaves the town, you embrace the whole circling presence of the distant mountains; you see Mount Mansfield looking over lake and land at Mount Marcy.

Equally with the view, though—I had been having views all day—I enjoyed, as I passed again along the avenue,

the pleasant, solid, American homes, with their blooming breadth of garden, sacred with peace and summer and twilight. I say “solid” with intent; the most of them seemed to have been tested and ripened by time. One of them there was—but of it I shall say nothing. I reserve it for its proper immortality in the first chapter of the great American novel.

It perhaps added a touch to my light impression of the old and the graceful that, as I wandered back to my hotel in the dusk, I heard repeatedly, as the home-faring laborers passed me in couples, the sound of a tongue of other than Yankee inflections. It was Canadian French.

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**Rudyard Kipling**

1865 – 1936

*“In his late twenties,” according to Tom Bassett, “Rudyard Kipling spent four winters near Brattleboro.” This budding author, born in British India, had lately married an American woman who was a native of the small Vermont town, and together they settled there in a house built to their specifications. While living in Brattleboro, Kipling wrote his two Jungle Books, his novels Captains Courageous and Kim, plus many short stories, articles and poems. In 1895, after inter-familial strife and the typhoid death of their beloved daughter, the Kiplings left Vermont (and America) to spend the rest of their lives in England, where he became a world-famous English poet, essayist, fiction writer, and journalist. – M.F.E.*

### Seasons in Brattleboro

[1892 - 1895]

We had walked abreast of the year from the very beginning and that was when the first blood-root came up between the patches of April snow, while yet the big drift at the bottom of the meadow held fast. In the shadow of the woods and under the blown pine-needles, clots of snow lay till far into May, but neither the season nor the flowers took any note of them.



Followed Summer, angry, fidgety, and nervous, with the corn and tobacco to ripen in the five short months, the pastures to reclothe, and the fallen leaves to hide away under new carpets. She went away, red-faced and angry to the last, slamming all the doors of the hills behind her, and Autumn, who is a lady, took charge.

No pen can describe the turning of the leaves—the hillsides were afire and the roads paved with crimson and gold. Then a wet wind blew, and ruined all the uniforms till nothing remained but pencil-shading of bare boughs.

There the seasons stopped awhile. Autumn was gone, Winter was not. We had Time dealt out to us—more, clear, fresh Time—grace-days to enjoy. The white wooden farmhouses were banked round two feet deep with dried leaves or earth, and the choppers went out to get ready next year's stores of wood.

The mosses and lichens, green, sulphur, and amber, stud the copper floor of needles, where the feathery ground-pine runs. There are checker-berries on the outskirts of the wood, where the partridge (he is a ruffled grouse really) dines, and by the deserted logging-roads, toadstools of all colours sprout on the decayed stumps. The woods are full of colour, belts and blotches of it, the colours of the savage—red, yellow, and blue. Yet in their lodges there is very little life.

Men, who are of one blood with sheep, have followed their friends and the railway along the river valleys where the towns are. Across the hills the inhabitants are few, and, outside their State, little known. They withdraw from society in November if they live on the uplands, coming down in May as the snow gives leave.

Not much more than a generation ago, these farms made their own clothes, soap, and candles, and killed their own meat thrice a year—beef, veal, and pig—and sat still between-times. Now they buy shop-made clothes, patent soaps, and kerosene; the huge red and gilt Biographies of Presidents; and the twenty-pound family Bible, with illuminated marriage-registers, mourning-cards, baptismal certificates, and hundreds of genuine steel engravings.

Here too, off the main-travelled roads, the wandering quack—Patent Electric Pills, nerve cures, etc.—divides the field with the seed and fruit man and the seller of cattle-boluses. They dose themselves a good deal, I fancy, for it is a poor family that does not know all about nervous prostration. So the quack drives a pair of horses and a gaily painted wagon with a hood, and sometimes takes his wife with him.

Once only have I met a pedlar afoot. He was an old man, shaken with palsy, and he pushed a thing exactly like a pauper's burial-cart, selling pins, tape, scents, and

flavourings. There are many such rovers, gelders of colts and the like, who work a long beat, south to Virginia almost, and north to the frontier, paying with talk and gossip for their entertainment.

Yet tramps are few, and that is well, the American article being a predatory ruffian who knows too much to work. Bad place to beg in after dark—on a farm—very—is Vermont. Gypsies pitch their camp by the river in the spring, and cooper horses.

Winter has chased all these really interesting people south, and in a few weeks, if we have anything of a snow, the back farms will be unvisited save by the doctor's hooded sleigh. It is no child's play to hold a practice here through the winter months, when the drifts are really formed, and a pair can drop in up to their saddle-pads. Four horses a day some of them use, and use up—for they are good men.

Now in the big silence of the snow is born, perhaps, not a little of the New England conscience which her children write about. There is much time to think, and thinking is a highly dangerous business. Conscience, fear, undigested reading, and, it may be, not too well-cooked food, have full swing. A man, and more particularly a woman, can easily hear strange voices—the Word of the Lord rolling between the dead hills; may see visions and dream dreams; get revelations and an outpouring of the spirit, and end (such things have been) lamentably enough in those big houses by the Connecticut River which have been tenderly christened The Retreat. Hate breeds as well as religion—the deep, instriking hate between neighbours, that is born of a hundred little things added up, brooded over, and hatched by the stove when two or three talk together in the long evenings. It would be very interesting to get the statistics of revivals and murders, and find how many of them have been committed in the spring.

But for undistracted people winter is one long delight of the eye. In other lands one knows the snow as a nuisance that comes and goes, and is sorely manhandled and messed at the last. Here it lies longer on the ground than any crop—from November to April sometimes—and for three months life goes to the tune of sleigh-bells, which are not, as a Southern visitor once hinted, ostentation, but safeguards. The man who drives without them is not loved.

The snow is a faithful barometer, foretelling good sleighing or stark confinement to barracks. It is all the manure the stony pastures receive; it cloaks the ground and prevents the frost [from] bursting pipes; it is the best—I had almost written the *only*—roadmaker in the States. On the other side, it can rise up in the night and bid the people sit still as the Egyptians. It can stop mails;

wipe out all time-tables; extinguish the lamps of twenty towns, and kill a man within sight of his door-step or hearing of his cattle unfed. No one who has been through even so modified a blizzard as New England can produce talks lightly of the snow.

Winter that is winter in earnest does not allow cattle and horses to play about the fields, so everything comes home; and since no share can break ground to any profit for some five months, there would seem to be very little to do. As a matter of fact, country interests at all seasons are extensive and peculiar, and the day is not long enough for them when you take out that time which a self-respecting man needs to turn himself round in.

An occasional visitor from the Cities or the Plains comes up panting to do things. He is set down to listen to the normal beat of his own heart—a sound that very few men have heard. In a few days, when the lather of impatience has dried off, he ceases to talk of “getting there” or “being left.” He does not desire to accomplish matters “right away,” nor does he look at his watch from force of habit but keeps it where it should be—in his stomach. At the last he goes back to his beleaguered city, unwillingly, partially civilized, soon to be resavaged by the clash of a thousand wars whose echo does not reach here.

The Danforth Library of Barnard possesses a single copy of Tom Bassett’s *Outsiders Inside Vermont* (published by The Stephen Greene Press of Brattleboro, Vermont, in 1967). It is shelved in the Vermont section and available to borrow.

### *Charles B. Danforth Library News*

*December 2025*



#### **Open Hours**

2-4 p.m. Monday  
2-4 p.m. Wednesday  
10 a.m. – Noon – Saturday  
**Closed December 24th**

*Wishing you a joyful holiday season*



#### **New Fiction:**

The Book of Dust: The Rose Field (Book of Dust, Volume 3), by Phillip Pullman

Clown Town, by Mick Herron

The Berry Pickers: A Novel, by Amanda Peters

Queen Esther: A Novel, by John Irving

The Black Wolf: A Novel (Chief Inspector Gamache Novel, 20), by Louise Penny

Here One Moment, by Liane Moriarty

#### **New Non-Fiction:**

Vermont Almanac: Stories From & For the Land. Volume VI.

Sitting with Dogs: Stories of rescue dogs going from lost to loved, by Rocky Kanaka

#### **Charles B. Danforth Library**

P.O. Box 204, Barnard, VT 05031

6208 VT Route 12

Phone: 802-234-9408

Email: [charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com)

**Trustees:** Paula Audsley, Margaret Edwards, Judy Maynes, Adelaide McCracken, and Susan Salter Reynolds

#### **LOCAL CRYPTOGRAM**

A cryptogram is a code in which one letter is substituted for another. For example, the word “Church” could be written BWMSBW. The letter B would be the letter C and would be so throughout the entire message. In this message E = N. The solution is found by trial and error. The CRYPTOGRAM answer is on the last page.

“RHEQSP HI QKS QHTS DXP

BXTDXPQ, DXP AXXF DXXF VEF

RVPTQK, DXP QKS QXLBK XD V

DPHSEFUZ KVEF VEF DXP V

QVUJ CSHFS QKS DHPS: HQ HI

QKS QHTS DXP KXTS.”

-SFHQK IHQRSUU

## FOOD SELF COLLECTION AT NWPL

The Norman Williams Public Library is collecting non-perishable food for the Woodstock Community Food Shelf. Please help your neighbors in need! Drop off non-perishable food in the box in the lobby any time during library hours: Mon, Wed, Thur, Fri, 10-6, Tues, 10-8 & Sat 10-4.

We'll deliver your donation to the Woodstock Community Food Shelf during their operating hours.

Norman Williams Public Library  
10 The Green, Woodstock, VT 05091, 802-457-2295  
[NormanWilliams.org](http://NormanWilliams.org)

## BILLINGS FARM AND MUSEUM

Billings Farm & Museum is a place to try new things! Visit us during the winter months between 10am – 4pm on weekends and select days only. Enjoy our ongoing programs and explore the Historic House and Farm Life Exhibits. Check out our colorful, large-scale contemporary art installation “Art on the Barns” across the buildings of this working dairy farm.

Here's what's coming up:

Winter Celebration on the Farm, Dec 20-Jan 4, 10am-4pm. The season's first snowflakes have fallen, which means it's time to celebrate the wonder of winter! The farm is beautifully transformed with twinkling lights and Victorian inspired holiday decor. Dip your own candles, taste some seasonal treats, make homemade applesauce, and more! <https://billingsfarm.org/events/winter-celebration-on-the-farm-25/2025-12-06/>

The 16th Annual Woodstock Vermont Film Series. Join us for eight remarkable films exploring resilience, artistry, and the power of human connection. Screenings take place on select Saturdays & Sundays at 3 pm at the Billings Farm Visitor Center Theater. Select screenings include filmmaker Q&As. Tickets: \$15 adult / \$12 members. Advance registration recommended! For more details, visit <https://billingsfarm.org/filmseries>

### 2025–26 Season Lineup:

Dec 20–21: Prime Minister  
Jan 3–4: The Librarians  
Jan 17–18: Far Out: Life on & after the Commune  
Jan 31–Feb 1: Seeds  
Feb 14–15: Gaucho, Gaucho  
Feb 28–Mar 1: Folktales  
Mar 14–15: Every Little Thing  
Mar 21–22: Natchez

Order your “Holiday Tasting Kit” from The Vermont Cheese Council! With just over three pounds of local

Vermont cheese (including Billings' Butter Cheddar), tasty accoutrements, and an exclusive macron collection...this is a perfectly delicious and unique gift for the holidays! Kits are limited, so don't delay. Learn more at <https://vtcheese.com/holidaytastingkit/>

Billings Farm & Museum  
Woodstock, VT  
[info@billingsfarm.org](mailto:info@billingsfarm.org)

## BARNARD HELPING HANDS

### PETITION FOR TOWN MEETING APPROPRIATION

As the financial requests from our community members increase, we have decided to petition the town for \$1000. Our petition is at the Barnard General Store. We need at least 40 signatures by January 1st for the town budget to include our request. We hope that you will sign your name to our petition in support of the work we do assisting members of our Barnard community.

Many thanks! We hope you all will have a wonderful holiday season.

## SILVER LAKE SYRUPS HOLIDAY HOURS

The Sugarhouse Has been transformed into a festive winter stop! Come pick out a gorgeous Fraser or Fraser/Balsam Cross Christmas tree and soak up the holiday cheer.

While you're here, enjoy Authentic Austrian Lebkuchen (gingerbread) and cookies, our homemade pies, Hot Chocolate, our famous Maple Creemees, pure Maple Syrup, stocking stuffers & lots more holiday goodies.

Holiday Hours: 2pm - 6pm, Until December 25.

Local delivery is available and if you are hosting a Holiday Party, you can rent our Maple Creemee Machine and treat your guests to a Vermont favorite!

Silver Lake Syrups, LLC  
Cell: (802) 345-6795  
[www.SilverLakeSyrups.com](http://www.SilverLakeSyrups.com)

## MVSU EMPLOYMENT OPENING

Mountain Views Supervisory Union is seeking a Student Support Services Administrative Assistant & Medicaid Specialist

To apply copy and paste this link into your web browser: <https://mvsu.schoolspring.com/?jobid=5471471> or email your letter of interest and résumé to [HR@mtnviews.org](mailto:HR@mtnviews.org)

Rayna Bishop, Director of Human Resources  
Mountain Views Supervisory Union, [HR@mtnviews.org](mailto:HR@mtnviews.org)

THE PLANNING COMMISSION meets on the second Monday of every month at 7 PM in the Town Office.

BARNARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION meets the first Monday of the month, 7:00pm, Town Hall.

BEES MEETINGS are held at 6:30pm on the 2nd Thursday of each month in the library at the school.

DANFORTH LIBRARY HOURS: Monday & Wednesdays 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.; and Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to Noon. ECFiber Wi-Fi. Phone: 802-234-9408. Email: [charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com).

SELECTBOARD meets the first and third Wednesday of the month at the Town offices at 7:00pm.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR, Kassie Hull, [mailto:selectboard@barnardvt.us](mailto:mailto:selectboard@barnardvt.us), 802-234-9211 x 4. Office hours: Tuesdays and Fridays 8am to 11am, and by appointment.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR, Robert Ramrath, [mailto:zoning@barnardvt.us](mailto:mailto:zoning@barnardvt.us), 802-234-9211 x 2. Available by email and phone during business hours Monday through Friday. In person meetings at the Town Office available by appointment only.

TOWN CLERK office hours are Monday and Tuesday, 8:00am—3:30pm. Call 234-9211 for an appointment.

THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:00pm at the Barnard Town Hall as necessary.

THE BARNARD ENERGY COMMITTEE meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm at the Town Hall

BARNARD GENERAL STORE, Monday-Saturday: 7am-7pm, Sundays: 8am-6pm. <https://www.facebook.com/barnardgeneralstore>

BARNARD LISTSERV: to subscribe please send an email to: [barnard-subscribe@lists.vitalcommunities.org](mailto:barnard-subscribe@lists.vitalcommunities.org)

RECYCLING Click [here](#) for Hours and Regulations

The Barnard Inn is running a "Feeding Neighbors & Sustaining Community" campaign. Purchase an e-Gift Card and in turn the chefs will feed neighbors. Whole chicken dinners (serves 4-6) and individual sized meals to help feed Vermonters in need. Thank you and please stay safe. E-Gift Cards are available at [www.barnardinn.com](http://www.barnardinn.com).

ECFIBER Governing Board meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm via. Zoom. Contact the clerk of the District. [secretary@ecfiber.net](mailto:secretary@ecfiber.net), for meeting information or visit <https://www.ecfiber.net/virtual-meetings/>

HISTORICAL SOCIETY Programs to be announced. Questions? Email: [historicalbarnard1761@gmail.com](mailto:historicalbarnard1761@gmail.com)

DELECTABLE MOUNTAIN QUILTERS (DMQ) meet the 1st Tuesday of every month at the Bethel Library from 1-3pm. Contact: Mary Croft 802-763-7074

### CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home."

– Edith Sitwell

### THE GLAD RAGS SALE

#### UPCOMING SALE AND COLLECTION DATES

The Spring 2026 Sale dates are: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, April 24, 25 and 26.

The Saturday Collection dates for the 2026 Spring sales are: 2/28, 3/14, 3/28, & 4/11 - Hours are 10-1.

The 2026 Fall Sale dates are: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday September 18, 19 and 20.

The 2026 Fall donation dates are: 7/18, 8/1, 8/15, & 8/29.

For more info about the sales and what donations we accept please visit - <http://www.gladrags.org>

Looking forward to seeing everyone next year!

The Glad Rags Volunteers

For updates please join our Facebook group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/145529065206/>

The Glad Rags Sale Association, Inc. supports agencies that provide health and welfare services to the greater Woodstock Community.

### NEWS FROM BARNARTS

Don't forget to go local for your holiday gifts - why not a 2026 Feast & Field Season Pass? Online at <https://feastandfield.ludus.com/passes.php>

Give your loved one guaranteed fun for 18 Thursdays next May-September. All passes purchased before January 1 will get extra perks like...

- \*a chance to provide input on the season
- \*sneak peek at the 2026 schedule before the public
- \*free ticket(s) to a Rumney Session or BarnArts production (number reflects pass level)

Supporting local businesses and art organizations creates ripples of good in the community - thank you!

BarnArts Center for the Arts  
PO Box 41  
Barnard, VT 05031

[www.barnarts.org](http://www.barnarts.org)  
[info@barnarts.org](mailto:info@barnarts.org)  
802-234-1645 (voicemail)